

Making Every Day an Ideal Day with a Work Schedule Template

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No other office management system influences practice success more than scheduling. It shapes everyone's day and has a direct bearing on both productivity and stress levels. For these reasons, many dentists have adopted an "ideal day" work schedule template to guide their front desk coordinator in scheduling patients.

What you think of as a perfect day at the practice will differ in some ways from other doctors' definitions, but they probably have certain characteristics in common: steady pace, smooth transitions, very few if any no-shows, low stress and high production. To experience days like this most of the time, follow these steps:

- 1. Determine how much time procedures *really* take.** If you haven't conducted procedural time studies for a few years or more, your office may be miscalculating how much time you'll typically need to perform treatment at a productive yet not frantic pace.
- 2. Switch to 10-minute scheduling increments if you haven't already.** Compared with the old 15-minute units, this approach enables you and your staff to allot time more accurately, reducing the incidence of running over or periods of downtime between patients, both of which create their own kinds of stress.
- 3. Create a template that will enable you to optimize your performance.** What's the best time of day for you to perform more challenging procedures? How many scheduling slots should you allocate for seeing new patients or handling emergencies in an average week? By answering questions like these, you are defining a day that would be ideal for you and your staff. Design a template that reflects these preferences and train staff to do their utmost to follow it.
- 4. Allow hygienists and assistants to lead you back and forth between treatment rooms.** It's your dental practice, but putting them in charge of your day will result in better pacing, efficiency and productivity.
- 5. Update your confirmation system for greater effectiveness.** Take advantage of the latest communication technologies, as well as excellent scripting, to ensure that most patients (99% is a realistic target) show up on time.

When you define your ideal day, it works like other performance targets... motivating you and your team to achieve it every day. Some days will still be less than ideal, but the overall results will be significantly better than if you continue using outdated scheduling techniques.

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